

# Avoiding Unconscious Bias in Hiring, Management and Promotions



Marietta Watts

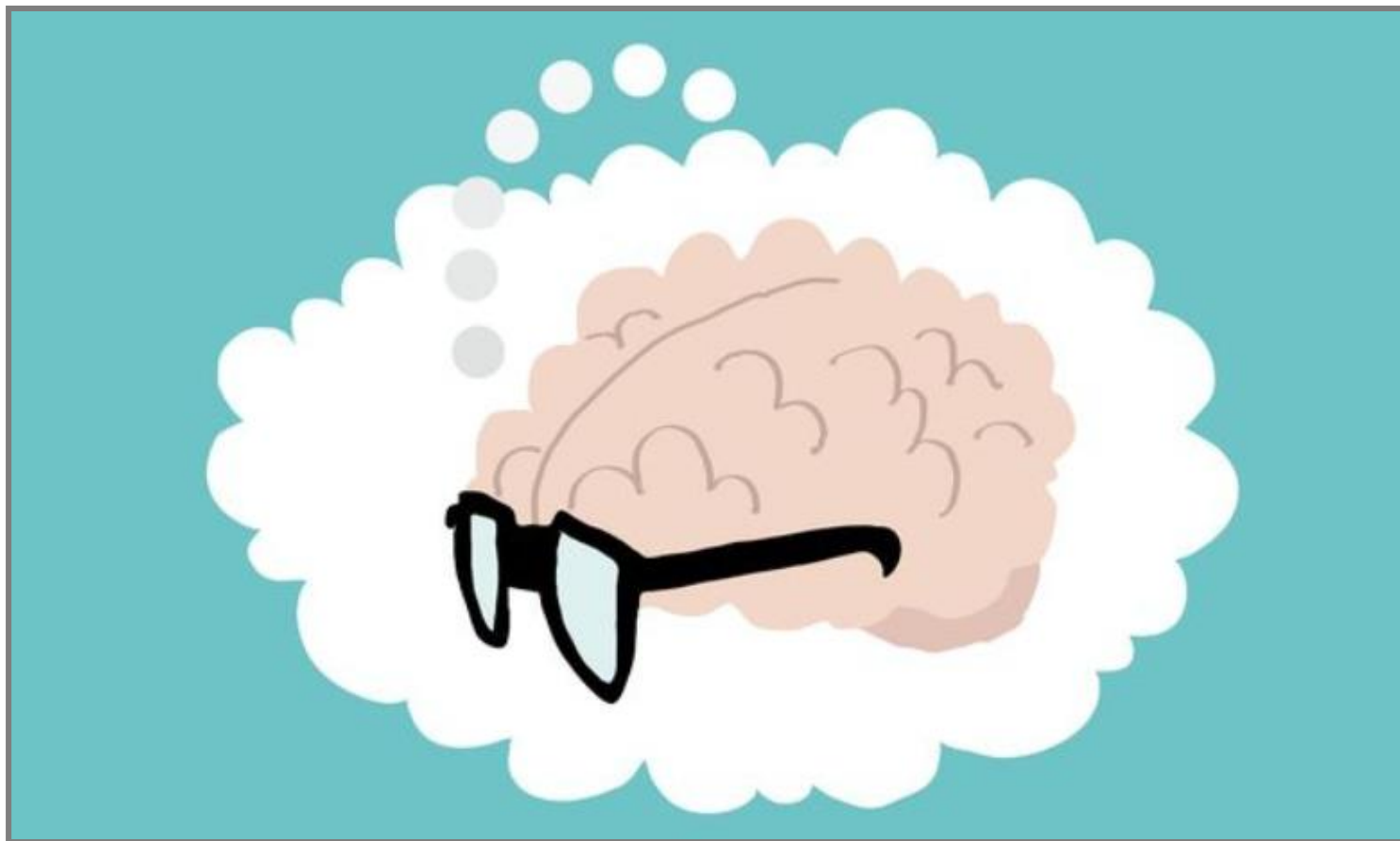
Director, Unconscious Bias Initiative  
Office for Institutional Diversity



**WHO IS  
“THEY”**



# Is Seeing Believing?



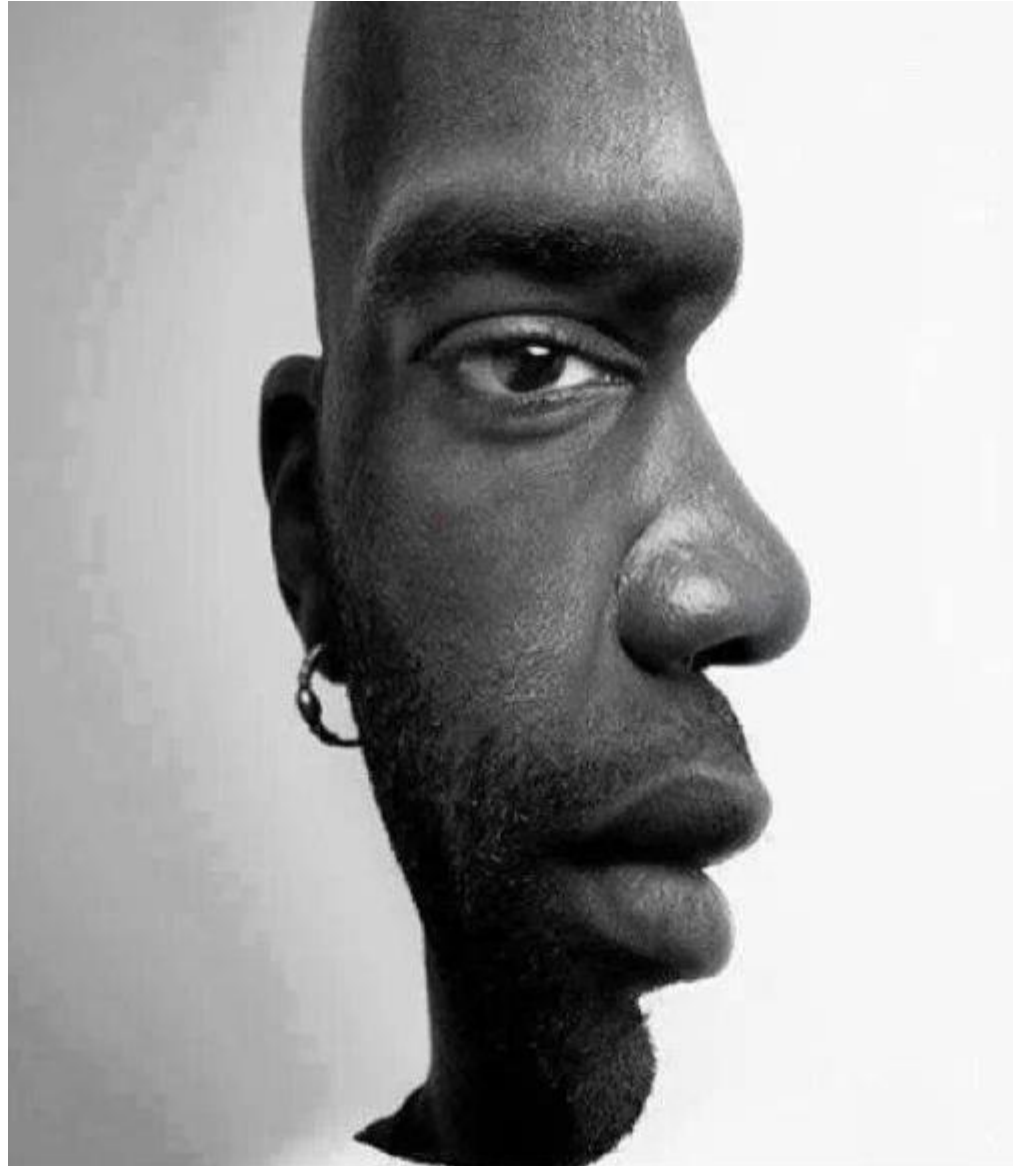




## Fast Brain vs Slow Brain











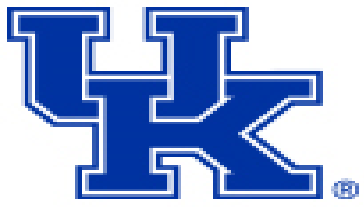
## Fast Brain vs Slow Brain

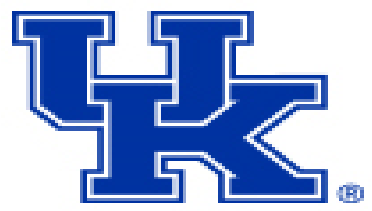






1200 x 620 - 8084925.com

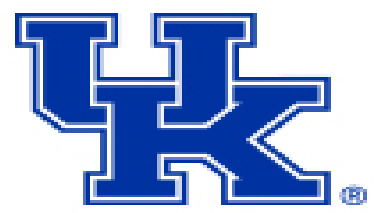




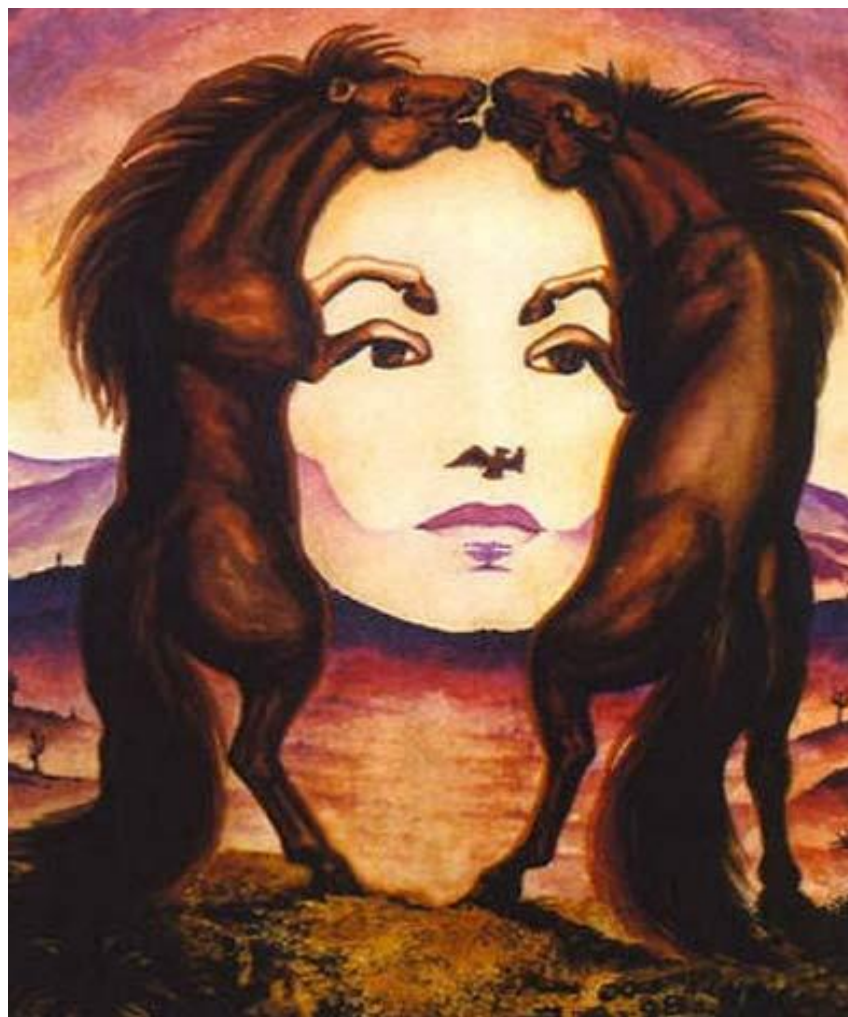






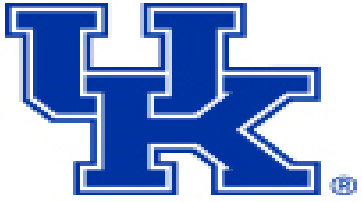










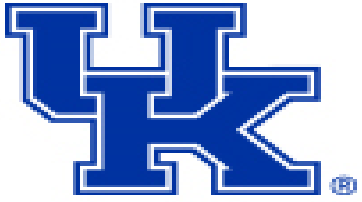


# What is Bias?

Bias is a blind spot that requires a shift in *how we think* about other people that we perceive to be different. *It is a belief or attitude we hold in our heads.*

Bias is the very fundamental way we look at and encounter the world.

Diversity is about noticing others; bias is all about you and your thoughts.



# What is Unconscious Bias?

## University of Kentucky:

- *Unconscious, Subconscious or Implicit Bias* refers to the automatic stereotypes or attitudes we hold about groups or people. These biases can be held *for* or *against* those most **like** us and most **different** from us.
  - Can be based on unconscious thoughts about gender, race, ethnicity, religion, age, personality types, or general appearance.
  - A host of brain functions, emotional responses, and cognitive processes that happen outside our conscious awareness but have a decisive effect on how we behave.
- A kind of prejudice you have that you aren't aware of, that affects the kinds of impressions and conclusions that you reach automatically, without thinking.

*Shankar Vedantam*

*Malcolm Gladwell*



# What is the Purpose of Bias?

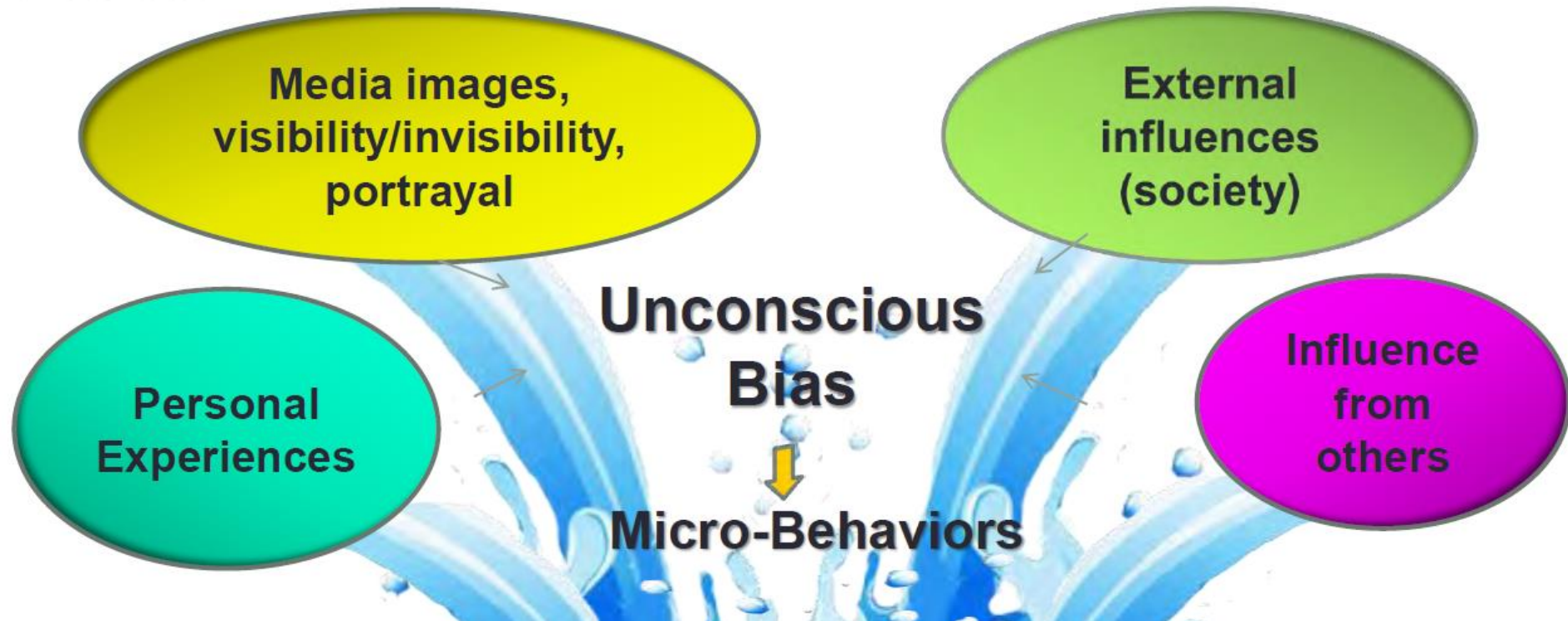




# Unconscious Bias

**CULTURE**

**CULTURE**





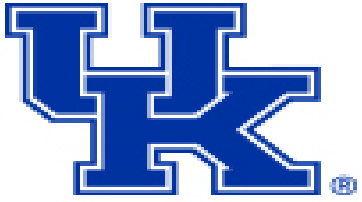
He thinks I  
don't know  
what I'm talking  
about and I  
haven't opened  
my mouth.



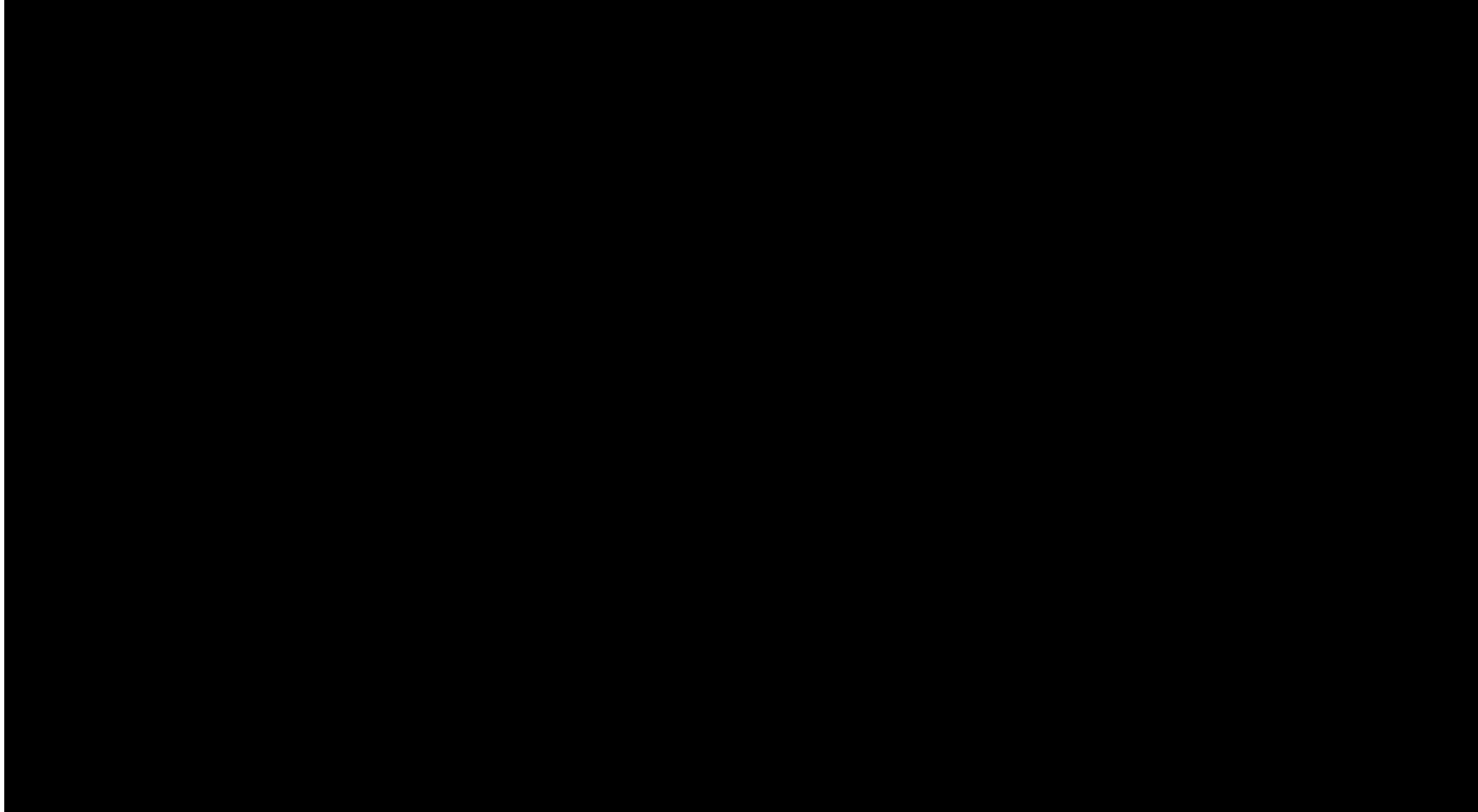
She's older  
than my  
mom. There's  
no way she'll  
listen to my  
ideas.

I really like  
him, he  
reminds me  
of my  
brother.





# An Unconscious Bias Example





# FedEx Commercial





**Gender**

**Ethnicity**

**Skin tone**

**Age**

**Environment**

**Appearance**

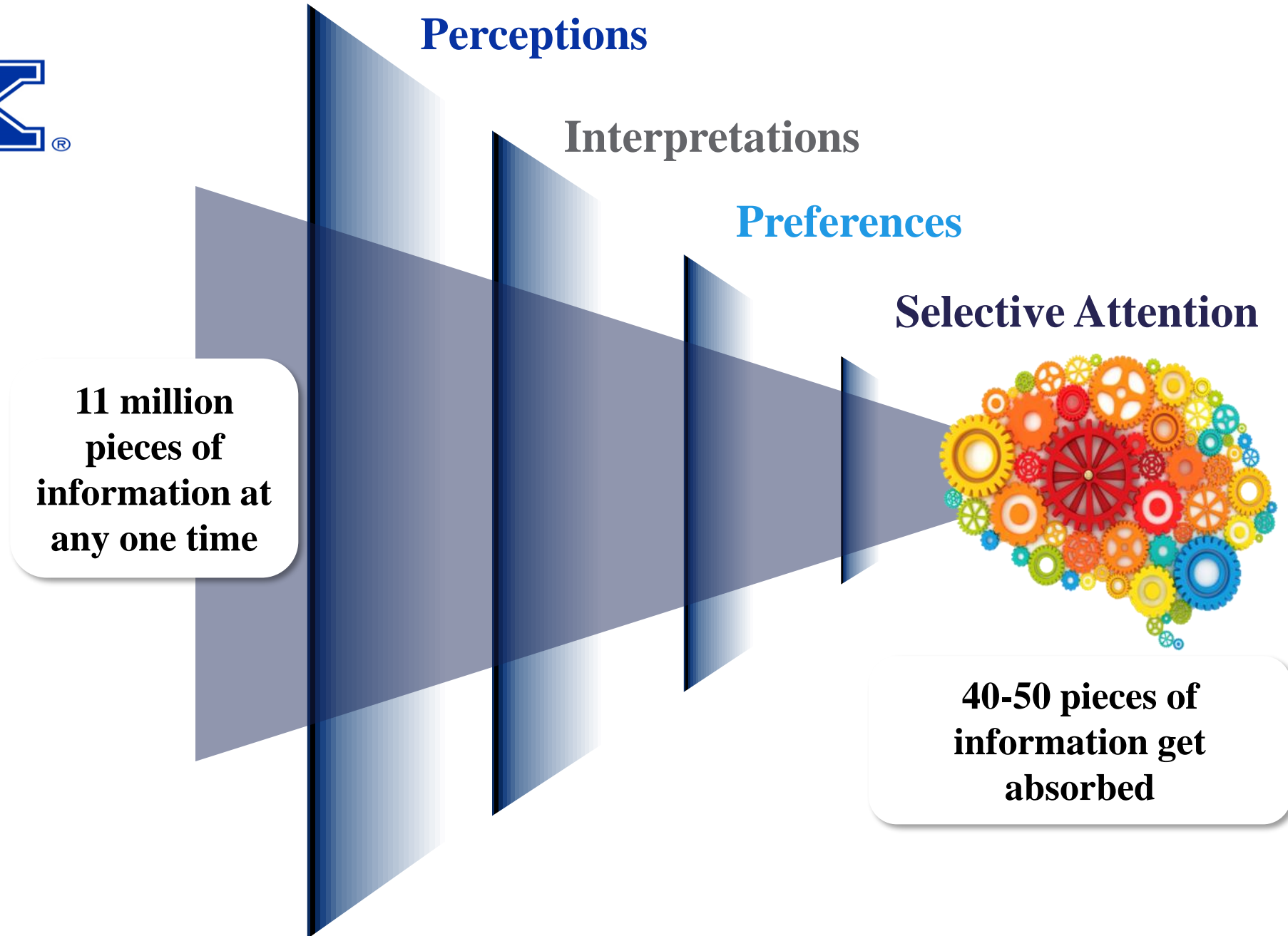
**What  
patterns do  
we read?**

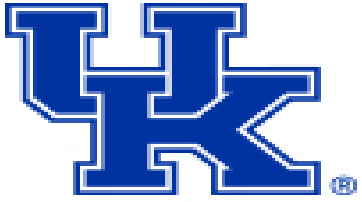
**Facial  
expression**

**Body posture**

**Body type**

**Clothing**





# What Do You Know?

Shirley A. Mohammed  
2345 Street Name Apt. 34  
Anytown, KY 42222



**System One  
Thinking**

**“Fast Brain”**



**System Two  
Thinking**

**“Slow Brain”**



**Book of Rules**



**Blueprint**



**Background**










John Ridley Stroop, 1935




John Ridley Stroop, 1935

# Micro-behaviors:

*Small acts, which are hard-to-see, often unconscious and may be non-verbal*

## **Micro-disadvantages:**

*subtle* behaviors, gestures, language, or other ways in which individuals are overlooked, ignored, excluded or discounted, usually based on identity characteristics.

## **Micro-advantages:**

*subtle* behaviors, gestures, language, or other ways in which individuals are given advantages over others around them, usually based on identity characteristics.

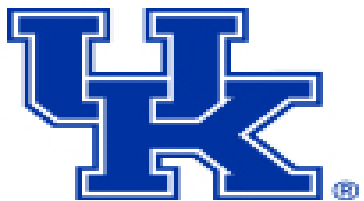
# Identifying Micro-Behaviors

## Individually:

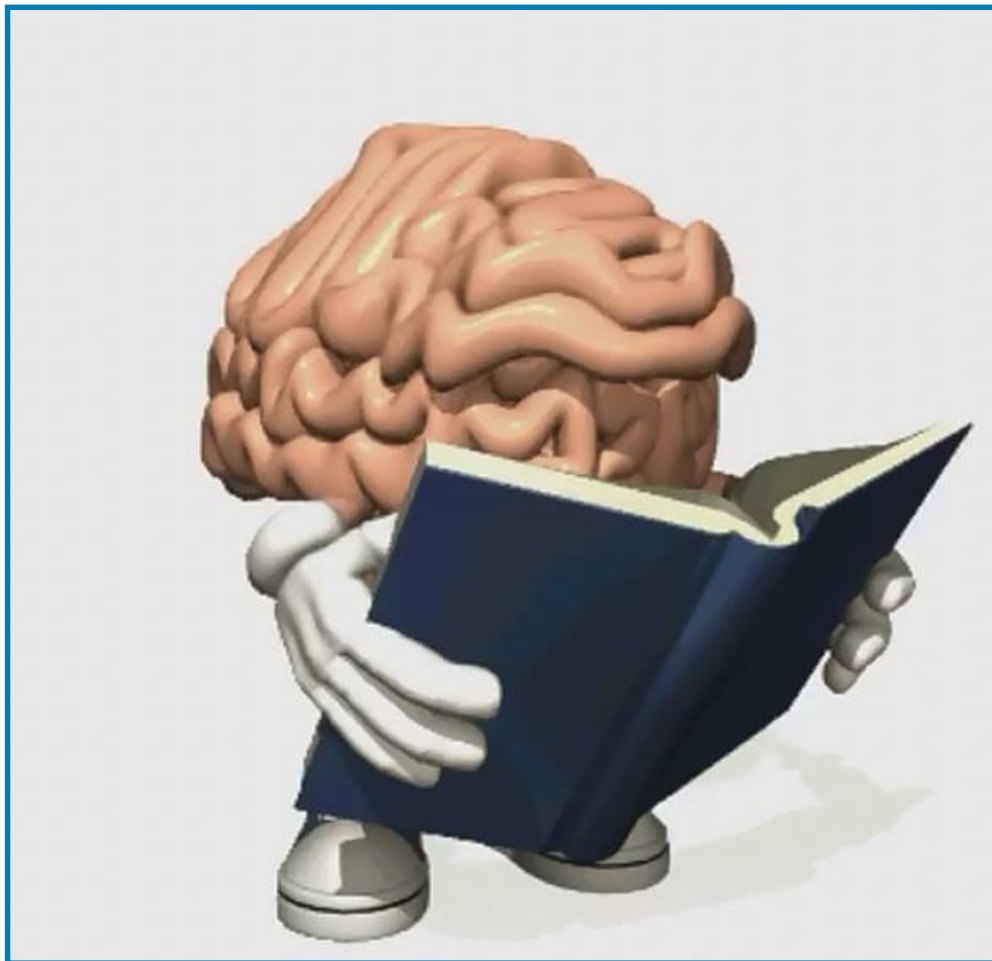
- What micro-behaviors have you experienced personally, as a receiver?
- What micro-behaviors may you have inadvertently sent your colleagues or employees?
- Can you think of biases you have that could translate into micro-disadvantages?

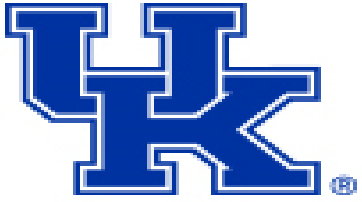
## Large Group Discussion:

- How do these messages impact overall equity and inclusion at your place of work?
- Where can we grow?



# Retrain Your Unconscious Mind





# Retrain Your Unconscious Mind

Be open to the fact that you have unconscious biases. Seek to **LEARN**:

**L**

- Listen for understanding

**E**

- Engage with people and groups you may not know very well, or toward whom you have biases

**A**

- Adjust your surroundings so that you spend most of your time in the company of people who have a better attitude than you

**R**

- React with friendliness and honest curiosity to those you perceive as “different.”

**N**

- Notice when your unconscious thoughts impact your behavior. Be open to giving and accepting feedback about biased behaviors

# Take a P.A.U.S.E.

## A quick way to check your reaction.

**P**

- Pay attention to what's actually happening, beneath the judgments and assessments

**A**

- Acknowledge your own reactions, interpretations and judgments

**U**

- Understand the other possible reactions, interpretations and judgments that may be possible

**S**

- Search for the most empowering, productive way to deal with the situation

**E**

- Execute your action plan



# Questions to Ask Yourself to Check Your Decision-Making

What are my biases and blind spots?

What is this person triggering in my background?

Do I have an automatic feeling or judgment about this person?

Do I notice any patterns in my decision making that might be impacted by my biases?

Am I being reminded of someone?

How might I consciously intervene to mitigate the impact of this bias?



[Brain Tricks - This Is How Your Brain Works - YouTube](#)





## How might your biases impact...

Whom you  
notice

Whom you  
spend time with

Whom you  
share  
information with



# 30-Day Plan

In the next 30 days, I commit to determining...

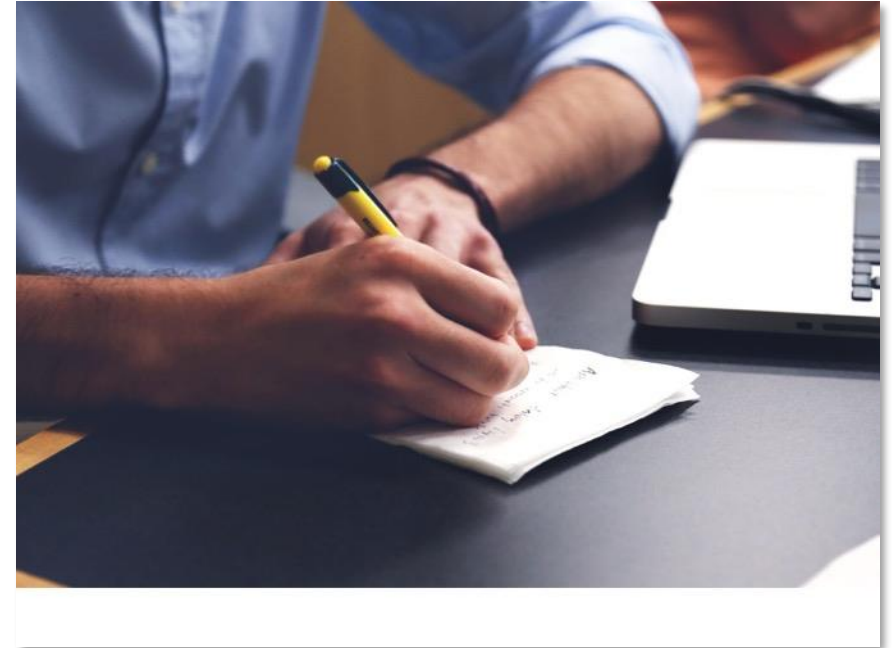
What I can do to promote my personal and professional interests in this area.

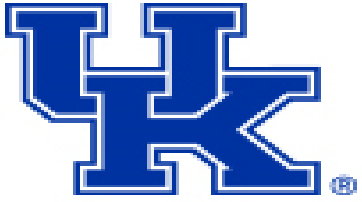


What the benefits will be.



What the costs of not doing so will be.





# Thank you!



**Marietta Watts**

Executive Diversity Liaison  
Office for Institutional Diversity  
(859)323-7301

[Marietta.watts@uky.edu](mailto:Marietta.watts@uky.edu)

[unconsciousbias@uky.edu](mailto:unconsciousbias@uky.edu)

[www.uky.edu/unconscious bias](http://www.uky.edu/unconsciousbias)